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**Common Sense, Miracles,
and the Apparent Age of the Earth**

SYNCRETISM and the Age of the Earth

Syncretism and the Age of the Earth

Kyle Butt, M.A.

In every time period, geographical location, and culture, the goal of evangelism is to translate the unchanging Gospel of Jesus Christ into meaningful concepts that can be understood, accepted, and obeyed by a specific culture or group (Hesselgrave and Rommen, 2000, p. 1). This process is most commonly referred to as contextualization. On the other hand, the process of syncretism is when biblical truth is altered due to pressure from the culture to which it is being communicated. The syncretized message is one that has forfeited truth and substituted in place of that truth concepts that are culturally acceptable and “meaningful,” but which lack a basis in truth and Scripture. Much syncretism has occurred due to the pressure and presence of atheistic evolution and modern “scientific” thinking in our secular, 21st-century American culture. This syncretism has manifested itself in numerous theories that compromise the Genesis account of Creation of which the most popular seems to be the Day-Age Theory.

THE AGE OF THE EARTH AND THE UNIVERSE

One of the core teachings of atheistic evolution is that the Universe is billions of years old. All of those involved in the discussion recognize that without such vast eons of time,

the supposed naturalistic processes at play in the evolutionary scheme would not have time to accomplish their work (even though, we would contend, all the time one could imagine would be insufficient to accomplish the impossibilities associated with atheistic evolution). Atheist David Mills wrote:

Despite widely divergent viewpoints, creationists and evolutionary biologists agree on a crucial fact: Six-thousand years is insufficient time for evolution to have produced the complex lifeforms we observe on Earth today. *Homo sapiens* could evolve only if given hundreds of millions of years to accumulate selective advantages. A 6000-year-old Earth means therefore that Genesis and the Theory of Evolution are forever irreconcilable (2006, p. 137).

Mills suggests that those who adopt the Day-Age Theory do so only in order to avoid being labeled as atheists, what he calls the “dreaded ‘A’ label.” While his equivocation of the concept of an old Earth with atheism is unfounded, he goes on to state that those who wish to force the Genesis text to accommodate an ancient Earth are involved in “a pompous intellectual charade” designed simply so they can “‘have it both ways’—imagining themselves to be both religious and scientific at the same time” (p. 151).

Countless other atheistic and/or evolutionary scientists have written concerning the opposition between

modern “science” and biblical teaching. [NOTE: The word “science” is in quotations, because what is often called “science” in the modern sense is actually evolutionary, assumption-based science that is not founded on fact, and what is routinely discounted as being unscientific is often much more rigorously verifiable than the modern idea of “science.” Thus, when most atheists/evolutionists speak of “science,” the meaning of “evolutionary or materialistic false science” should be understood.] Co-discoverer of the DNA double helix structure, Francis Crick, wrote:

I realized early on that it is detailed scientific knowledge which makes certain religious beliefs untenable. A knowledge of the true age of the earth and of the fossil record makes it impossible for any balanced intellect to believe in the literal truth of every part of the Bible in the way that fundamentalists do. And if some of the Bible is manifestly wrong, why should any of the rest of it be accepted automatically? (1988, p. 11).

In truth, Crick’s and Mills’ assessment that much of modern atheistic/evolutionary-based “science” is directly opposed to a straightforward reading of the biblical text is correct. That being the case, what would we expect to see if certain scholars wanted to “have it both ways” and appear both religious and scientific? We would expect to see a massive reinterpretation of key aspects of the biblical text, especially as it relates to God’s creative activities. In addition, we would not be surprised if multiple ways of cramming billions of years into the text of Genesis were explored by different authors.

In truth, numerous ways have been invented in an attempt to fit millions of years into the biblical text including the Gap Theory, Progressive Creationism, Modified Progressive Creationism, the Modified Gap Theory, the Non-world view, the Multiple Gap Theory,

and the Framework Hypothesis (see Thompson, 2000, pp. 275-306). The fact that multiple ways are attempted to accommodate the billions of years advocated by modern “science” is a tell-tale sign that the deep-time scenario did not derive from the Bible, and is only being forced into the text in an attempt to syncretize the Bible with modern “science.” In order to see this trend of syncretism, consider the writing of David Snoke, an advocate of the Day-Age Theory.

DAVID SNOKE AND THE DAY-AGE THEORY

David Snoke’s book, *A Biblical Case for an Old Earth*, published by Baker Books in 2006, provides an excellent example of an attempt to syncretize the biblical account of Creation with the evolutionary-based scenario of an Earth measured in millions or billions of years. Snoke explains in his preface: “This book presents the case of a ‘day-age’ view that takes Genesis 1 as giving a real chronological sequence, but not necessarily of twenty-four-hour days” (p. 9). Snoke’s primary contention is that the biblical account of Creation can legitimately be interpreted to allow for billions of years of Earth history. He believes that certain scientific evidences call for a reinterpretation of the days of Creation to allow the days to be unidentified ages of extended time.

The primary scientific evidences that he believes point toward the conclusion that the Earth is old are presented in chapter two of his book and include such concepts as distant starlight, geological layers, and tree-ring dating methods (pp. 24-46). He contends that these scientific evidences for an old Earth have no other possible answer than “God made them look old.” And while he believes that God could do that, he does not believe that is what God did, and thus he maintains that we must interpret the biblical text to accommodate the billions of years that modern science supposes.

While Snoke is aware of the many highly qualified scientists who advocate

a young Earth, and who believe the scientific evidence points to a young Earth, he believes these scientists are in error. He believes that since, by and large, these scientists have not been successful at being accepted in peer-reviewed (read that as evolutionary-based) journals, and have attempted nonetheless to present their views to the general public, they have bypassed the rules of modern science. He stated:

Young-earth creationists engage in scientific practices widely considered unethical by mainstream scientists. This sounds like quite an accusation, but I see it as intrinsic to the young-earth science movement. Young-earth creation scientists say that an enormous amount of modern science is wrong, either through a conspiracy or through shared beliefs that lead scientists to unconsciously suppress or alter data. Therefore, young-earth creation scientists must bypass the modern science establishment.... Most scientists feel that bypassing other scientists to market your scientific claims directly to the public is highly unethical, since the public is not qualified to evaluate scientific claims (pp. 187-188).

Snoke manifests his true feelings and his mode of operation in the above

quote. He cannot bring himself to say that an “enormous amount of modern science is wrong.” One wonders **why** it would be difficult to say that. If the Bible is correct that Satan is the “god of this world” (2 Corinthians 4:4), and he is the father of lies (John 8:44), and he has blinded those who do not believe, what better way to “blind” people to the truth than by using the respected “scientific” avenues to propagate misinformation? In reality, many of those who suggest that the available scientific evidence points to a young Earth have not bypassed the scientific process. On the contrary, they have been excluded from the process by those who refuse to accept anything that allows for a straightforward reading of the Bible to be correct (see Butt, 2008). Credentialed scientists such as Henry Morris have critically assessed the scientific evidence and have demonstrated that it favors a young Earth (Whitcomb and Morris, 1961). Others such as John D. Morris and Don DeYoung have done the same (Morris, 1994; DeYoung, 2005). In fact, John Ashton edited the book, *In Six Days*, in which 50 credentialed scientists give their reasons for believing in a Creation that happened in six, literal days (Ashton, 2000). Additionally, Kurt P. Wise, who

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earned an M.A. and Ph.D. in paleontology from Harvard University while studying under Stephen Jay Gould, maintains that the scientific and biblical evidence converge to show that the Earth's age is measured in thousands of years, not billions (2002).

The scientific case for an old Earth is not nearly as convincing as Snoke suggests. It is fraught with error. But it is the prevailing idea maintained by the majority of scientists. That is why, it seems, that Snoke and other old-Earth advocates feel the burden to conform to it. In his attempt to justify the avenue he has taken, Snoke appeals to the concept of contextualization (though he does not call it that). He states:

As hard as it may be, we must work to convince the scientific world, not bypass it. This means we must take the time to learn the basic rules of the secular scientific world, even while we question the unproven assumptions we hear. Many missions experts affirm that to impact a culture, the church must address the top elements of society, lest it be permanently marginalized (p. 191).

Snoke, in essence, is contending that if we write off a majority of the "evidences" for an old Earth as faulty, then the bulk of the scientific community is not going to listen to what we say. In order to gain an audience with the "top elements of society" we must work within the "rules" of the "secular scientific world." It is unfortunate that in his attempt to keep Christianity from being "marginalized" he has failed to correctly identify the "unproven assumptions" that the evolutionary-based scientific community is foisting on the public.

Snoke's "Biblical" Case

Snoke contends that his understanding of the Bible is not driven by his scientific observations, but is somewhat based upon them. He admits that his "experience in science has affected" his interpretation of the Bible, and he says, "To put it another way, **it is very**

improbable that I ever would have come up with the view that the earth is millions of years old if I had never studied science" (p. 11, emp. added). Even though Snoke contends that his mode of operation in this instance is justified, it seems evident that Snoke allowed his (faulty) understanding of modern science to dictate his interpretation of the Bible.

He further suggests that while all scientific observation is apt to change or be adjusted by new observations, "theological systems are provisional works of human beings, too.... While we must not take lightly the Bible interpretation of faithful scholars of the past, we can also hope that new generations have something to add as well" (pp. 22-23). What Snoke, as a representative of the "new generation" adds, unfortunately, is a biblical interpretation that forfeits much of its truth because it is driven by modern evolutionary science.

The Day-Age Theory advocated by Snoke and a host of others suggests that the days of Creation in Genesis one were not 24-hour periods, but were long, extended periods that would have taken millions or billions of years to complete. Much of the "biblical" case for this theory stems from the idea that the Hebrew word *yom*, which is translated as "day" in Genesis one and two, can have various meanings. One of those meanings is "an unidentified period of time," as in the phrase "the day of the Lord." In this phrase, "day" does not connote an exact 24-hour timeframe. Those who advocate the Day-Age Theory maintain that such a usage could also extend to the days of Creation in Genesis one. After Weston Fields cited a quote from Wilbur Smith, who advocated the Day-Age Theory, Fields said about Smith's statement: "Most importantly, the primary argument for the Day-Age Theory is shown to be based merely on the fact that the word 'day' *can* (not *must!*) be used either literally or figuratively in the Bible, the argument most commonly

used by those defending this position" (1976, p. 169, italics in orig.).

The problem with attempting to force the days of Creation in Genesis one to mean anything other than literal, 24-hour days is that the context simply does not allow for it. First, the word *yom*, when used with numeric adjectives such as one, two, three, etc. always means a literal 24-hour day in non-prophetic biblical literature. Arthur Custance, though an old-Earth proponent of the Gap Theory, in critiquing the Day-Age Theory, alluded to the fact that the Hebrew word *yom*, translated "day" in Genesis one, always refers to a literal 24-hour period when coupled with numeric adjectives such as those that are used in Genesis 1:5,8,13, etc. (1977, p. 100). Snoke actually conceded: "It is true that **we can find no other passage in Scripture in which days are numbered and have a generic sense**" (2006, p. 145, emp. added). But he then attempts to show why Genesis one might be the only instance in all of Scripture in which this is the case. Needless to say, when a novel rendering of a recognized literary construction is appealed to in order to justify a belief that stems, not from the text, but from a view of modern "scientific" observation, the special pleading required is immediately suspect.

In addition to the fact that the word *yom* is coupled with numeric adjectives, other contextual factors verify that the word means a literal, 24-hour day. Thompson provides an excellent list of at least nine reasons why the days of Genesis one must logically be viewed as literal, 24-hour periods (2000, pp. 181-211). Custance emphatically argued that the context demands a literal reading for the word "day." He stated: "The fact is that the Hebrew language just does not have any other way of expressing the exact idea of a true day!" (1977, p. 100). Fields emphatically states: "It is our conclusion, therefore, that the Day-Age Theory is impossible. It is grammatically and exegetically preposterous. Its only reason for existence is its allowance for

Common Sense, Miracles, and the Apparent Age of the Earth

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To many people, the Earth looks extremely old—not hundreds or thousands of years old, but millions or billions of years old. When these individuals hear a creationist talk about a “young Earth” that is only a few thousand years old, they may wonder how someone could hold such a view. “How can anyone look at Earth and think it was created less than 10,000 years ago?” Aside from their reliance on faulty (and often contradictory) assumption-based radiometric dating methods, evolutionists simply believe the Earth **looks** exceedingly old. The Earth’s rocks, hills, canyons, and mountains leave them with the impression that the Earth has been around for billions of years.

EVOLUTION’S DEMAND

One must first recognize that evolutionary theory **demand**s an old Earth. As evolutionist Michael Le Page acknowledged in 2008: “A young Earth would...be a problem for evolution, since evolution by natural selection **requires vast stretches of time—‘deep time’**—as Darwin realized” (198[2652]:26, emp. added). He went on to admit forthrightly that one of the main “sorts of findings...that could have falsified evolution...is a young Earth” (p. 26). If it is the case that a young Earth would be a lethal blow to evolutionary theory, it should come as no surprise that evolutionists cannot help but see the Earth as being billions of years old. Even if they did not always have “old-Earth impressions,” the man-made theory of evolution demands such an interpretation of our planet, else the entire theory of evolution would have to be abandoned. [NOTE: Evolution should be abandoned anyway since it is impossible—whether the Earth is young or old. What’s more, many dating methods exist that point to a young Earth (see Humphreys, 2005).]

DEFINE “OLD”

How does anyone actually know what a billion-year-old Earth looks like? Older humans can be identified accurately as “old” (1) because their actual birthdates can be known (i.e., people witnessed their births and gave them birth certificates), and (2) possibly because their appearance can be compared to both older and younger people. The same can be said for animals and plants. People can know exactly when various animals were born or when a

tree was planted. But what about the Earth as a whole? No one was alive when this or any other planet was “born.” No one was present on Earth to see the first rock formed, hill raised, or canyon created. How can anyone reasonably say, “The Earth looks billions of years old”? Old compared to what?

APPARENT AGE AND THE GREAT CATASTROPHE

People who contend that the Earth appears billions of years old must also discount the very real possibility that one or more great catastrophes could have occurred in the past to drastically change the appearance of the Earth. Many have witnessed how earthquakes, local floods, volcanoes, etc. have radically altered the looks of certain places on Earth (e.g., Mt. St. Helens and Spirit Lake). Consider how a tree that has been struck by lightning or damaged during a flood might **appear** much older than it is. Newly formed igneous rocks from volcanoes often **appear** old. A person in his twenties who is badly burned may **appear** as if he is much older—perhaps two or three times his real age. In truth, Christians rightly interpret the Earth based upon the fact that only a few thousand years ago, God supernaturally altered the Earth’s appearance forever by causing “all the fountains of the great deep” to break up and the “windows of heaven” to open, bringing rain “on the Earth for forty days and forty nights” (Genesis 7:11-12; cf. Psalm 104:6-8). Most of the oil, coal beds, fossil graveyards, etc. in the Earth, which many contend are evidence of an old Earth, can be easily and rationally explained as a result of the worldwide Flood of Noah’s day (Genesis 6-8; see Whitcomb and Morris, 1961). In short, even if it could be proven that “the Earth looks very old,” evolutionists cannot rationally deny that such apparent age could be the result of one or more great catastrophes.

MIRACULOUS MATURITY

The fact that the Earth appeared older than it actually was at Creation is perfectly logical in light of the nature of God’s miracles. When Jesus miraculously turned water to wine, He did not plant a vine, wait for the grapes to grow over the course of several years, and then harvest them. He supernaturally by-passed this normal, time-laden process and instantaneously made an extremely tasty drink (John



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The background of the entire page is a photograph of a man and a woman in a shower, embracing each other. The man is on the left, looking towards the woman on the right. They are both smiling and appear to be enjoying the moment. The water is spraying over them. Overlaid on this image is a book cover. The book cover has a white background with a large, stylized black arrow pointing to the right. The text 'Receiving the Gift of' is written in a dark, serif font above the arrow. The word 'Salvation' is written in a large, white, serif font across the arrow. Below the arrow, there is a photograph of a hand holding a small, white, wrapped gift with a light blue ribbon. The book cover is tilted slightly to the right.

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Resources



2:1-10). When Jesus fed several thousand men, women, and children with only five loaves of bread and two fish (Matthew 14:13-21), He did not make the large amounts of bread needed to feed this many people after planting a crop of wheat, waiting months for it to grow, and then harvesting, threshing, grinding, and baking it. Again, Jesus by-passed a lengthy, natural process and miraculously created bread. Similarly, God made the creation full-grown. He made “the fruit tree” (Genesis 1:11), not just a seed that would eventually grow into a fruit-bearing tree. He created “every winged bird” (Genesis 1:21), not eggs from which birds would hatch months later. He created a grown man capable of walking, talking, working, and procreating (Genesis 1:26-2:25). God miraculously made a **mature** Creation.

“MATURE” LIGHT

Certainly one of the most amazing, time-defying, mature miracles of God’s Creation was the creation of the heavenly bodies on day four. God had previously made light (intrinsic light) on day one of Creation; on day four He made the generators of light. [NOTE: Keep in mind that “the Father of lights” (James 1:17), Who is “light” (1 John 1:5), could easily create light without first having to create the Sun. Just as God could produce a fruit-bearing tree on day three without a seed, He could produce light supernaturally on day one without the “usual” light bearers.] Since light travels nearly six trillion miles per year, and since some stars are an estimated 15 billion light years away, evolutionists assume that the Universe must be at least 15 billion years old. Otherwise, how could we see the light from stars that are so far away?

Once again, the answer (or at least a major part of the answer) to this supposed conundrum goes back to the fact that **God worked an amazing miracle at Creation**. When God created the heavenly bodies (the generators of light) on day four of Creation, He simultaneously (and supernaturally!) made their light to appear on Earth. Light that might **naturally** take long amounts of time to reach Earth, **miraculously** reached Earth in an instant. Just as God had said on day one, “Let there be light... and there was light” (Genesis 1:3), on day four He said, “Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens.... And it was so” (1:14,15). These lights were created to “give light on the earth” (1:15,17) and to “divide the day from the night” (1:14,18). God also “set them in the firmament

of the heavens...**for signs and seasons, and for days and years**” (1:17,14, emp. added). God had a purpose for creating the heavenly bodies, and He made them so that man benefitted from them without having to wait long periods of time for their light to reach Earth.

Starlight did not have to travel for 15 billion years before reaching Earth. When God made Adam and Eve two days after His creation of the heavenly bodies, the first couple immediately profited from God’s miraculous creation of starlight. The first couple did not sleep under starless skies for years waiting for light from distant stars to reach Earth. God spoke the stars **and their light rays** into existence. Similar to how God created full-grown trees in one day (which if cut down may have had dozens or hundreds of visible tree rings), God made light from far-away stars appear instantly. Indeed, considering the nature of God’s miracles at Creation, a star that might “appear” to be extremely old, is actually only a few thousand years old. [NOTE: It is beyond the purview of this article to answer every quibble about starlight and time. Plausible, creation-friendly explanations regarding fluctuations in light from stars, the formation of supernovas, etc. have been offered by various scientists (see Norman and Setterfield, 1987; Humphreys, 1994). Evolutionary physicist João Magueijo (2003) has even proposed that the speed of light is not a constant.]

CONCLUSION

The fact that the Earth and Universe may **appear** much older than it is in no way bolsters the case for evolution. In truth, Scripture reveals that both the miracle of a mature Creation and the cataclysmic Flood are adequate explanations for a perceived “old Earth.”

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the *time* needed by evolutionary geology and biology” (1976, p. 178, *italics in orig.*). Chaffey and Lisle correctly conclude: “In other words, according to old-earthers, it seems that the general rules of interpretation just do not apply to Genesis. Instead, it should be treated differently than any other book” (2008, p. 31).

Irrelevant Issues

Snoke’s biblical case for an old Earth hinges on novel interpretations and reading into the text concepts that are not there, rather than inferring ideas from the biblical text that the author intended. For instance, one of his contentions is that a major obstacle to believing in an old Earth is the concept of animal death before the fall. He believes that if he can show that animals died before Adam and Eve sinned, then that will help convince many young Earth creationists that he is right about an old Earth. He argues that concepts such as darkness and the sea indicate danger, and their presence in the creation account insinuate that animals could die outside of the Garden of Eden. He writes: “For the ancient Hebrew, however, the sea was a place of danger. Just as in the darkness, where dangerous animals lurk out of sight, ready to jump out, in the sea dangerous monsters lurk out of sight below the surface ready to jump up” (p. 59). He builds on this theme by connecting God’s power with God’s wrath, and stating that it is difficult in Scripture to “make a distinction between the demonstration of God’s power and the demonstration of his wrath” (p. 93).

His analysis is faulty for a number of reasons. He spends over 50 pages and two major chapters dealing with animal death before the Fall, because, in his opinion, “this is *the* issue that leads to objections to an old Earth” (p. 99, *italics in orig.*). In reality, however, **the issue of Earth’s age has nothing to do with the concept of animal death before the Fall.** It is just as easy to believe in a young Earth and

maintain that animals died before the Fall as it is to believe in a young Earth while believing that there was no animal death before the Fall. The issue of whether or not there was animal death before the Fall is outside the purview of this article (see Thompson, 2001), and it is irrelevant to the age of the Earth and to the definition of the word “day” in Genesis one.

Furthermore, not only is his connection of animal death to the age of the Earth exaggerated, his strained exegesis of elements—such as the sea and darkness indicating danger, and God’s power being virtually equivalent to His wrath—is equally exaggerated and shows evident signs of special pleading. The reason the days in Genesis one are viewed as literal, 24-hour days is based on a proper understanding of the Hebrew word for *yom* in Genesis one; and the unity of the rest of the Scriptures flesh out a literal meaning of the word (such as Exodus 20:11). The belief in a young Earth may be connected in some literature with the concept of animal death, but **nothing in Scripture mandates this connection**, and one does not stand or fall with the other.

Snoke further weakens his case when he attempts to tie the days of Creation with the events that were seen by John in the book of Revelation. He wrote: “The seven seals, one may argue, them-

selves come as the sevenfold completion of the Sabbath day of creation. Thus the events of the seven seals represent the ‘beginning of the birth pangs’ mentioned by Jesus in Matthew 24:4-8” (p. 110). He then concluded: “If we take seriously the sequences of Revelation as representing a real chronology of events over a long period of time, then it is natural to see a parallel with the sequence of Genesis one representing a real chronology over a long period of time” (p. 110). Notice how he stretches to try to connect Genesis one to the entire book of Revelation. This stretch is impossible to prove and is dubious due to the fact that Genesis and Revelation are not even the same genre of literature. While Genesis is historic narrative, Revelation is apocalyptic literature.

It is often the case that those who are attempting to force outside information into the biblical text resort to the book of Revelation and contend that difficult-to-understand passages in that book lend credence to their novel interpretation. We must always remember, however, that the basic rule of good Bible interpretation is to assess the less difficult passages first and not to allow more difficult passages to obscure the clear meaning of the less difficult ones. In an attempt to make Genesis one and two look like difficult passages, Snoke connects them to Revelation and tries to let passages of Revelation that are

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more difficult to understand reinterpret the clear historic narrative of Genesis. Such is not the way to engage in proper Bible interpretation.

An Additional Problem

It is often the case that those who compromise the truth of the creation account are forced to compromise other aspects of the biblical text as well. One of the primary biblical events where such compromises are seen is the biblical Flood of Noah. Due to their adherence to such evolutionarily based concepts as uniformitarianism, many old-Earth advocates feel that a global flood would have been “scientifically” impossible, and they feel that adequate physical evidence is not available to justify a world-wide flood. As Snoke stated: “One thing I could not do, without being utterly dishonest in regard to my scientific experience, would be to adopt the view of Henry Morris and some other flood geologists, that science tells us that the earth *appears* to have had a global, six-mile-deep flood. It does not” (p. 175, italics in orig.). [NOTE: Snoke inserts a strawman argument into the above quote, suggesting that flood geologists must advocate a “six-mile deep” flood. That is based on his uniformitarian assumption that the topography of the Earth must have been the same during the Flood as it is now. Such an assumption should not be granted. In fact, there seems to be a biblical indication that the height of mountains and the depth of oceanic trenches was drastically altered during or following the Flood (Psalm 104:8).] Because of these, and other reasons, old Earth advocates often reinterpret the Genesis account in a way that allows for a local flood instead of one that covered the entire globe.

Snoke laid out his approach clearly when he declared: “The scientific data cause us to take a second look at the traditional interpretation, because things appear inconsistent with flood geology” (p. 174). This statement is another indication of why he has syncretized

many aspects of the Bible. He consistently gives precedence to the “scientific” evidence, and uses it to “reinterpret” the biblical text. His teachings (and all other old Earth ideas) are based primarily, not on what the Bible says, but on what modern “science” says, and how modern scientific discoveries can be squeezed into the biblical text. This approach is flawed, not only because it gives the biblical text a secondary status compared to modern evolutionary science, but also because it selectively chooses those “scientific” evidences that purportedly prove an old Earth. The approach discounts the legitimate scientific evidences that point to a young Earth and the global Flood (see Morris and Austin, 2003; Whitcomb and Morris, 1961). Furthermore, modern “scientific” ideas change rapidly, and many of the ideas that are used today to “reinterpret” the biblical text will be defunct tomorrow.

Relying, then, not on a proper understanding of the biblical text, but on an adherence to modern “science,” Snoke and others insist that the Flood of Noah was a local event that did not cover the entire globe. Arthur Custance, the old-Earth advocate of the Gap Theory, gives a hint as to his mode of biblical interpretation, when he wrote: “Actually, I would say personally that anyone who takes the text wholly seriously will be forced to conclude that the event had a quite limited magnitude in terms of *depth* of water, simply because the run-off was slow. This run-off can be shown from the figures in the text to have been only a few inches per day!” (1979, p. 25, italics in orig.).

Notice the built-in assumptions that undergird Custance’s conclusion. He is assuming that the processes we see today are the same ones that were at work during the Flood. And he is assuming that we can understand Earth’s topography during the Flood based on our current knowledge of its topography. In essence, Custance is using a uniformitarian assumption that things are continuing now as they did

in the past. While he insists in other places that he is not discounting all miraculous events during the Flood, he (like Snoke and others) relies quite heavily on an application of uniformitarian processes to events surrounding the Flood. Notice, also, that he believes the text of Genesis should be understood in light of what he thinks he knows scientifically about water run-off rates. Could it be, however, that there are certain aspects of water run-off that he does not fully understand and that would not call for the Flood to be “quite limited” in magnitude? Could it be that the topography of the Earth was vastly different from what we see today? Or is it possible that the complete saturation of the entire Earth slowed the run-off process? Any number of possibilities could be supplied as to why run-off was slow that would not require us to conclude that the Flood was a local event. Yet Custance appeals to his knowledge of water run-off rates, and believes that anyone who wants to take the text of Genesis seriously must factor them into his understanding of the text.

By minimalizing the Flood to that of a local catastrophe and not a global phenomenon, many old-Earth advocates have put their “scientific” knowledge of evolutionary-based geology and uniformitarianism in front of an accurate understanding and interpretation of the text of Genesis. The method of interpretation that allows them to discount the week of Creation as being composed of literal, 24-hour days that occurred a few thousand years ago, is the same mode of interpretation that they use to discount the global Flood. That is, they have relied on **current assumptions** by modern evolutionary and uniformitarian science to lead their biblical interpretation around by the nose.

Snoke understands that many will see his reinterpretation of the days of Genesis one and of the global Flood as a sell out. In an effort to soften the blow of this accusation, Snoke stated:

"I can already hear people saying, 'Here we go down the slippery slope. First he wants to "explain away" the creation week, now he wants to "explain away" the flood, then what?'" (p. 158). He knows that many conservative scholars, who see such tactics as Snoke uses, often conclude that those interpretative devices allow for faulty biblical interpretations in other places.

While Snoke insists that he is not trying to negate all the miracles in the Bible, he fails to realize that his interpretative method has already compromised two of the most important and most physically impacting miracles in the Universe's history: Creation and the Flood. With these two miracles "out of the way," the door is opened for all types of reinterpretations, and many of the New Testament warnings and teachings are rendered meaningless. For instance, in 2 Peter 3:5-6, we read: "For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water, by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water." About this verse, Snoke wrote: "The New Testament references to this passage also do not specify the size of the flood. Peter says that the *kosmos* was destroyed (2 Peter 3:6), a word that typically refers to political order (hence, 'cosmopolitan')" (p. 169).

His conclusion concerning the word *kosmos* is incorrect. The word *kosmos* does not "typically" refer to political order. In fact, that use of the word is less than typical when compared with the **typical** uses of it. In one of the most respected Greek lexicons available, the authors give for the meanings of the word: "the orderly Universe...the world as the earth, the planet upon which we live...the world as the habitation of mankind...earth, world in contrast to heaven" (Bauer, et al., 1979, pp. 445-447). Each of these meanings comes **before** the meaning of *kosmos* referring to mankind or the political order. In addition, the inspired writer linked the world with the concepts of "the heavens

and the Earth;" clearly referring to the physical realms of the terrestrial globe and what surrounds it.

CONCLUSION

The age of the Earth is not a peripheral issue that is irrelevant to one's understanding of the Bible. As has rightly been concluded, even by those who adopt an old-Earth approach: "The debate over the age of the earth is not just an academic exercise in dating but a very lively debate over the very core themes of the Bible, which relate to our view of all life" (Snoke, p. 194). The age of the Earth, then, often becomes a test as to how a person will approach the entirety of the biblical text. Those who choose to look to culture and modern "science" for the answers find themselves reinterpreting the biblical text to fit the modern notions of the evolutionary, uniformitarian scientific community. Once they veer from an accurate understanding of Genesis one and two, they are forced to do the same with the global Flood, and numerous other ideas found in the Bible.

A proper understanding of modern science, however, shows that there is no conflict with what we know to be fact and a straightforward reading of Genesis one and two as a historical narrative that describes the Creation of the entire Universe in six literal, 24-hour days only a few thousand years ago. In fact, a host of credentialed scientists have shown that the actual facts we possess about the physical Universe point to a young Earth and militate against an old-Earth interpretation. There is no conflict between fact-based science and the concept of a young Earth. Those who have chosen to adopt old-Earth views have done so in a spirit of syncretism, and have diluted the truth and power of the biblical text. It is our hope that they will see the error into which they have been led and into which they have led others, and turn from such compromising practices.

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NOTE FROM *The Editor*



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